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CAREER COACHING

Supercharge YOUR CAREER

Nia Magoulaniti-McGregor asks top businesswomen and a business coach for tips on how to accelerate career growth

“**T**here are a few unspoken rules to giving your career a mammoth boost,” says Mosidi Seretlo, a former employee in the corporate world, and now an executive business coach. “But, for many years I had no idea what these were!”

“I believed that if I worked hard, everything would fall into place. But that’s not taking into account the old boys’ club, the inner workings of a company, or even your own limiting beliefs, which hold you back,” she says.

Seretlo adds that a sponsor is the first thing a woman needs to accelerate her growth: “Call them a career guardian angel, but this is someone who will speak on your behalf in meetings when the conversation turns to who to promote. Your sponsor will show you the ropes and help you learn about the intangibles.”

“You need to get to the heart of the business. If you want to be CEO, you must move around, go overseas, and learn the business inside out.” – Mosidi Seretlo

A career path, she says, is not made by merely working hard, but also by forming relationships to help you navigate the political world. “You need to get to the heart of the business. If you want to be CEO, you must move around, go overseas, and learn the business inside out.”

“Set a goal,” says Faith Modipa, director at Elegant Fuel. “And choose a mentor to teach you about day-to-day operations. Being hardworking is non-negotiable, but being principled and being patient — there are no short cuts to success — help.”

“Focus on healthy competition within and outside your organisation. The petrochemical industry is dominated by men and some male directors have tried to make it clear that ‘this is a man’s job’, but I never allowed myself to feel intimidated. I proved them wrong through sheer performance. I also invested in constantly upgrading my skills,



Mosidi Seretlo

keeping a clear vision, remaining curious, and learning to control my emotions.”

Linda Makalima, an independent non-executive director at Nedbank and formerly director and head of Investment Banking Coverage (SA) at Standard Bank, says: “Harness your ambition. You can use that as a springboard to help you notice opportunities.” But, she also believes a sponsor is a strategic necessity. “Without a sponsor speaking on your behalf, you will find the road ahead very difficult. I had one who used to say ‘I recommended you for that

promotion. Now don’t mess it up! I never did.”

Makalima says besides a sponsor to advocate for you and a mentor to guide you through organisational issues, a business coach will complete the “systems” you need around you. “A coach will help you think about limitations you may place on yourself and help you draw on the power within.”

Modipa, Seretlo and Makalima all agree that personal ethics is paramount. “Ethics is the currency of your professional worth,” says Makalima. “It allows you to trade at a premium. Be impeccable in word and deed, never turn a blind eye to corruption. The company may survive but you won’t.”

Seretlo says there must be an authentic fit for a career path to work. “At one company with a large male culture, I was told ‘don’t wear pink frilly stuff’. I wore power suits — not me at all. I should have embraced who I am; I regret playing a part.”

Makalima says let stress bring out your best. “Look at pressure as your tailwind. Be excited about it. When adrenaline is coursing through your veins, it’s time to tell the universe to ‘bring it on!’” ■



Linda Makalima

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Faith Modipa

SUPERCHARGING

1. Take risks. Get out of your comfort zone.
2. Find a sponsor, a mentor and a business coach.
3. Harness your ambition. It will help you notice opportunities.
4. Embrace pressure. Let it bring out your best.
5. Maintain your ethics. It’s the currency of your professional worth.
6. Find an authentic fit. If you’re trying too hard to fit in, you may be in the wrong company.
7. Learn the business inside out.

